



Why Are Mosquitoes on the Rise?

A recent study to document the number and type of mosquitoes found in the UAE has uncovered alarming results in terms of both the amount and variety of species prevalent in the country. Conducted by the Institute of Virology at the University of Veterinary Medicine in Vienna, Austria, [the study](#) placed mosquito traps at seven locations across the country and found more than 1,000 samples from 10 different species.

The increase in mosquito numbers is being blamed largely on the rising number of potential breeding grounds. Primarily, this consists of areas which foster standing water, such as building sites, ponds or even back gardens. UAE residents are being advised to be vigilant against allowing standing water to gather in their own vicinity for fear that the mosquitoes it attracts could bring disease.

A startling study

Led by Dr Jeremy Camp, the scientists behind the study placed mosquito traps at Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary and two artificial wetland sites surrounding Al Qudra Lake in Dubai. They also placed further traps at four other locations, including the artificial Lake Zakher in Al Ain, Al Ain Zoo, Al Ain Oasis and Wadi Wurayah National Park in Fujairah.

The traps were all baited with dry ice to replicate the carbon dioxide exhaled by humans which attracts mosquitoes. Over two catching sessions, a total of 1,142 specimens from 10 species were captured, five of which had never been observed in the UAE before. More concerningly, the urban locations may have returned fewer individual insects, but they did seem to evidence thriving populations in the vicinity.

Carrier of disease

The results are worrying because of the risk of mosquitoes carrying disease from one species and region to another. The good news is that there were very few anopheline mosquitoes found, which are the genus responsible for propagating malaria. Their current scarcity is being attributed to the success of an eradication programme implemented in the UAE in the 1970s.

However, two mosquito-borne viruses were detected among the samples collected. The first was Barkedji virus (BJV), which was first discovered in Senegal in 2013, while the second was the Bagaza virus, which has been known to kill wildfowl but appears to be harmless to humans. The strain of mosquito which carries the deadly



West Nile Virus was found among the samples collected, though thankfully the virus itself was not.

Prevention better than the cure

While [improved anti-mosquito medication](#) is becoming increasingly available in a commercial market, prevention is always better than the cure and reducing the number of mosquitoes in the UAE is preferable to combating their effect once here. This can be most easily achieved by diminishing their opportunities to create a natural habitat in the country.

Since stagnant pools of water are where mosquitoes lay their eggs, eliminating these from your home and garden are the most sure-fire ways of inhibiting mosquitoes' chances of procreating. This can include everything from the rainwater which gathers in children's buckets and spades to the ponds and lakes which are becoming so fashionable in new housing developments.